

The Girl and the Unicorn



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Lily loved her grandmother's orchard best of all. Every summer morning she skipped between the apple trees, her straw hat bouncing and her honey-blond braids swinging. Grandma Rose called it the greenest, quietest place in the whole world. Lily thought it was magic. The bees hummed, the leaves whispered, and something wonderful always seemed to hide just out of sight.



Grandma Rose was wise and kind. She wore a lavender apron over her white blouse and kept her silver-grey hair in a neat bun. She knew every tree by name. "The orchard keeps secrets," she told Lily one afternoon, her warm brown eyes twinkling behind wire-rimmed glasses. "If you are quiet and patient, you might just meet one." Lily wondered what she meant.



One golden morning, Lily heard a soft rustle near the oldest apple tree. She peeked around the trunk and gasped. A unicorn stood there, pony-sized and graceful, with a creamy white coat that gleamed faintly silver. Its long mane was soft pearl-pink, and a delicate silver horn spiraled from its forehead. Its big violet eyes were wide and shy. "Hello," Lily whispered. The unicorn flicked its tail and vanished.



Lily did not run after it. She remembered Grandma Rose's words about patience. So she sat down quietly on the soft grass, folded her hands, and waited. The orchard grew still. She could hear her own heartbeat and the gentle tapping of a robin on a branch. She waited a long, long time. But the unicorn did not come back. Not that day.



The next morning, Lily returned with a small basket of sweet apples. She set two on the grass near the old tree and sat a little way off. "These are for you," she said softly. "Grandma Rose's apples are the sweetest." She sang a quiet song and did not move. The unicorn watched from behind a thicket, its violet eyes curious but wary. It did not come closer.



Day after day, Lily visited the orchard. She always brought apples and gentle words. Sometimes she told the unicorn about her drawings or her cat. Sometimes she just sat in the sun. The unicorn began to creep a little nearer each time. First to the edge of the trees, then to the grass, then almost close enough to touch. But it always kept its distance.



"You are very patient," said Grandma Rose one evening, peeling apples at the kitchen table. "I have seen you sitting so still under the old tree. Patience is a kind of magic, you know." Lily smiled, showing the little gap between her front teeth. "I think it is worth waiting for," she said. Grandma Rose's brown eyes crinkled warmly behind her glasses.



One misty morning, Lily found something new. Tiny silver hoofprints led past the orchard toward a hidden clearing deep in the woods. She followed them carefully, her brown boots soft on the moss. The clearing was beautiful, full of wildflowers and softly swaying grass. In the middle stood the unicorn, drinking from a small spring. It lifted its head and looked right at Lily.



The unicorn did not run. Lily held out an apple, her arm steady and her voice gentle. "It's only me," she whispered. "I won't hurt you. I promise." The unicorn took one slow step, then another. Its silver hooves made no sound on the grass. Its pearl-pink mane drifted in the breeze. Lily stayed perfectly still. Her heart thumped, but she did not move.



The unicorn lowered its head and sniffed the apple. Then, very softly, it ate from Lily's hand. Its nose was warm and velvety. Lily laughed, a happy little sound, and the unicorn's ears pricked up. "You liked it!" she whispered. The unicorn nosed her shoulder gently. It was the first time it had come this close. Lily felt like the luckiest girl in the whole world.



After that, Lily came every single day. The unicorn waited for her by the spring in the secret clearing. Lily braided a bracelet from soft green grass and tied it gently around the unicorn's foreleg. "Now we match," she said, pointing to her own braids. The unicorn nickered happily. It let Lily brush its pearl-pink mane, and they walked together under the trees.



One afternoon, Lily told the unicorn her most important promise. "I will keep this place a secret," she said seriously. "No one will ever find your woodland home." The unicorn rested its head against her shoulder. Lily knew then that trust was earned, one quiet morning at a time. It was their special secret, shared under the apple trees.



That evening, Lily told Grandma Rose about her friend, just a little. Grandma Rose smiled and put an arm around her. "I know," she said softly. "The orchard has always been a safe place for gentle creatures. It will be our secret too." She gave Lily a small gold locket to keep the secret close to her heart. Lily hugged her tightly. "Thank you, Grandma."



Lily and the unicorn spent the whole summer together. They raced through the wildflowers and napped in the warm grass. The unicorn was no longer shy or scared. It was her devoted friend. When autumn came and the leaves turned gold, Lily visited the orchard every day. "I'll come back every summer," she promised. She tied a fresh grass bracelet around its foreleg.



The unicorn nickered as if it understood. It stood by the old apple tree and watched Lily go, its silver horn catching the sunset light. Lily waved her straw hat high in the air. She knew the unicorn would be waiting. True friendship, she had learned, could grow from patience and a gentle heart. She kept the secret safe, always.



And whenever Lily returned to the orchard, she would sit quietly under the oldest tree. The bees hummed, the leaves whispered, and the unicorn came to her. Its violet eyes were bright and unafraid. Lily smiled her gentle smile, glad of the patient girl she had learned to be. In the greenest, quietest place, a secret friendship bloomed forever.